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ABSTRACT

This guidebook was designed to help concerned citizens identify and prevent child abuse. The guidebook provides information about the extent of child abuse in the United States generally and within Oklahoma specifically, and stresses that under Oklahoma state law every adult has the responsibility to report suspected abuse. Programs and services for dealing with child abuse, and information about how to prevent child abuse from occurring, are discussed. The guidebook examines the four major types of child abuse, namely, psychological maltreatment, neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. For each of these types, the scope of the problem is outlined, and specific examples, myths and facts, and physical and behavioral indicators are listed. Telephone numbers are provided for reporting child abuse within Oklahoma and for requesting further information about abuse prevention. (MDM)

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For Kids' Sake

A Child Abuse Prevention and Reporting Kit
Revised Edition

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You Don't Have to be An Expert to PREVENT CHILD ABUSE

In fact, the protection of Oklahoma's children is everyone's responsibility. The problem and the solution to child abuse lie within every community in Oklahoma.

YOU CAN HELP

This kit contains:

- facts about child abuse
- information on reporting suspected abuse
- steps to prevent abuse
- ways to get involved

Remember, children depend on you for their protection.

FOR KIDS' SAKE...

...KNOW THE FACTS

In the United States,

- over 2,700,000 children are abused and neglected each year.
- it is estimated that a minimum of 1,200 children die each year due to physical abuse or neglect. That's three children every day.
- approximately 90 percent of all child abuse and neglect deaths occur in children under age five; 53 percent are under a year old.
- one child in five will be sexually abused by the age of 18.
- 80-90 percent of sex offenders are known to the child.
- over 1/3 of child sexual abuse involves children five years old or younger.
- it generally is accepted that the national figures underrepresent the actual incidence of abuse and neglect.

In Oklahoma,

- an average of 22 children died yearly between 1981 and 1991 as a result of child abuse and neglect. In 1991, 38 child deaths were confirmed.
- more than 8,000 cases of child abuse and neglect are confirmed each year.
- in confirmed cases of physical abuse, 25 percent also involve sexual abuse.
- between 1981 and 1991 child abuse and neglect fatalities increased 192 percent.
- confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect have increased 122 percent since 1981.
- the incidence of child abuse and neglect is consistent with the national figures.

What would you do if you suspected or knew that:

- a father immersed his two year old child in scalding water?
- a five year old child was fondled by a teenage babysitter?
- a small child was locked in a closed car on a 90 degree day?
- a mother refused to seek necessary medical treatment for her children?
- a baby was severely shaken by a parent?
- a parent had involved a 15 year old child in sexual activities?

FOR KIDS' SAKE...

...REPORT

What is the Law?

Title 21, Section 845 of the Oklahoma Statutes states, "Abuse and neglect... means harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare ...." This includes, but is not limited to, nonaccidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, or neglect.

Who must report?

EVERY PERSON, private citizen or professional, in Oklahoma who has reason to believe that a child under 18 has been abused is mandated by law to report the suspected abuse. Failure to do so is a crime. No person, regardless of their relationship with the child or family, is immune from reporting suspected abuse. A person making a report in good faith is immune from both civil and criminal liability.

When to report?

A report of suspected abuse is only a request for an investigation. A request for investigation should be made when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child or adolescent has been abused or neglected or is in danger of being abused. The person making the request for investigation does not need to prove the abuse. Investigation and validation of child abuse reports are the responsibility of the Department of Human Services or law enforcement personnel.

If additional incidents of abuse occur after the initial report has been made, make another request for investigation.

How is abuse reported?

A request for investigation can be made to any county office of the Department of Human Services or to the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-522-3511. This number is answered 24 hours a day.

When reporting, the following information will be requested:

- name, age and gender of child and other family members
- address, phone numbers and/or directions to child's home
- parents' place of employment
- description of suspected abuse
- current condition of the child

What happens to the report?

A child protection worker from the Department of Human Services investigates the reported abuse. The investigation will result in one of the following conclusions:

- abuse or neglect ruled out
- uncertain findings
- abuse or neglect confirmed

In confirmed cases, a service plan is developed to prevent the recurrence of abuse to the child. When appropriate, findings are reported to the District Attorney for possible legal action.

Remember: A report of suspected child abuse is a responsible attempt to protect a child.

FOR KIDS SAKE...

...PREVENT

Treatment for victims and their families is essential to stopping abuse once it has occurred.

But ... what if you could stop abuse from ever occurring?

What if you could PREVENT child abuse?

Since child abuse is a community problem, prevention efforts must be initiated at the local level.

Child abuse is a complex problem and therefore a number of different strategies must be used.

The following programs should be available in every community in Oklahoma:

Support programs for new parents

- family-centered birthing opportunities
- information about child development
- basic infant care
- information about social services and health resources

Early and regular child and family screening and treatment

- home health care visits
- child health and guidance services
- WIC services
- Sooner Start Early Intervention services

Child care opportunities

- affordable, quality day care
- Head Start
- babysitting cooperatives
- latch key programs

Programs for abused children and young adults

- therapy programs for victims
- support groups for children and adolescents
- programs for adults abused as children

Life skills education for children and young adults

- personal safety programs in the public schools
- marriage and parenthood courses
- job skills training
- stress management

Self-help groups and other neighborhood supports

- parent education and support groups
- foster grandparents/parent aides
- teen parent programs

Family support services

- crisis hotline counseling
- emergency food, clothing, and shelter services
- respite care
- crisis nurseries
- home visitation
- parent education/support warmlines

Community organization activities

- Oklahoma State Department of Health
  Office of Child Abuse Prevention
- County Health Department
  Child Guidance Clinics
- Oklahoma Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse
- Child Abuse Prevention District Task Forces

Public information and education about child abuse prevention

- Oklahoma State Department of Health
  Office of Child Abuse Prevention
- Oklahoma Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse

Remember: The problem and the solution to child abuse lie within your community. GET INVOLVED.

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What Is Psychological Maltreatment?

Two types of psychological maltreatment are generally recognized: psychological neglect and psychological abuse. Subtypes of psychological maltreatment include: rejecting, terrorizing, isolating, exploiting/corrupting and denying emotional responsiveness.

Psychological neglect is the consistent failure of a parent or caretaker to provide a child with appropriate support, attention and affection.

Psychological abuse is a chronic pattern of behaviors such as belittling, humiliating and ridiculing a child.

Both types of maltreatment can result in significantly impaired psychological growth and development in the child.

Scope Of The Problem

Psychological maltreatment is seen as the core component of all forms of abuse. It may occur as the only form of maltreatment or in conjunction with other forms of abuse. All abused children, therefore, suffer some form of psychological maltreatment.

Examples Of Psychological Maltreatment

A parent or caretaker chronically:

- takes little or no interest in the child and the child's activities.
- criticizes the child for behavior that is developmentally normal.
- belittles and shames the child.
- blames the child for things over which the child has little or no control.
- uses the child as a scapegoat when things go wrong.
- treats the child differently from other children in the household.
- restricts the child's activities and peer relationships.
- engages in bizarre acts of torture or torment, such as locking the child in a closet.
- imposes extreme forms of punishment.

How To Recognize Psychological Maltreatment

The signs of psychological maltreatment may be less obvious than other forms of abuse. Psychological maltreatment is suspected when a child exhibits impaired development, destructive behavior or chronic somatic complaints that cannot be explained, medically or circumstantially. A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing psychological maltreatment.

Physical Indicators

- eating disorders, problems
- sleep disturbances, nightmares
- inappropriate wetting or soiling
- speech disorders, stuttering
- failure to thrive
- developmental lags
- asthma, severe allergies or gastrointestinal ulcers

Behavioral Indicators

- habit disorders, such as biting, rocking, head banging, thumbsucking in an older child
- poor peer relationships
- behavioral extremes, overly compliant - demanding; withdrawn - aggressive
- sad appearance
- apathy
- lack of responsiveness
- self-destructive behavior, oblivious to hazards and risks
- chronic academic underachievement
- irrational and persistent fears, dreads or hatreds

What Is Child Neglect?

Neglect is the failure of a parent or caretaker to provide a child under 18 with basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, medical care, educational opportunity, protection and supervision.

Scope Of The Problem

In the United States, it is estimated that the incidence of child neglect may be five times greater than that of physical abuse. At least 50 percent of child neglect reports are confirmed. Over 5,000 incidents of child neglect are confirmed each year in Oklahoma.

Myths	Facts
Most poor families neglect their children.	Poverty is not neglect. Families with limited resources can provide basic care for their children by using free clinics or social services.
Children will outgrow the effects of neglect.	There are well-documented psychological, intellectual and neurological deficits in children resulting from neglect.
Neglect is not as serious a problem as abuse.	Both physical abuse and neglect pose a serious health problem for children. Over 50 percent of child abuse reports in Oklahoma are for neglect.
If a family is reported for neglect, the children are automatically removed from the home.	Children are removed only if there are conditions that threaten the life, safety or health of the child.

How To Recognize Child Neglect

A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing neglect.

Physical Indicators

- height and weight significantly below age level
- inappropriate clothing for weather
- poor hygiene, including lice, body odor, scaly skin
- child abandoned or left with inadequate supervision
- untreated illness or injury
- lack of safe, warm, sanitary shelter
- lack of necessary medical and dental care

Behavioral Indicators

- begs or steals food
- falls asleep in school, lethargic
- poor school attendance, frequent tardiness
- chronic hunger
- dull, apathetic appearance
- runs away from home
- repeated acts of vandalism
- reports no caretaker in the home
- assumes adult responsibilities

FAILURE TO THRIVE: A possible case of child abuse

Failure to thrive (FTT) is a condition in which children show a marked retardation or cessation of growth. On a normal growth chart, FTT children may fall below the 3rd percentile, or may show little to no growth over time. FTT can result from (1) a medical condition, (2) environmental factors, such as neglect or disturbed parenting, or (3) a combination of medical and environmental factors.

FAILURE TO THRIVE

- can be life threatening
- is usually diagnosed in children age 2 and under
- must be confirmed by a medical evaluation

What Is Physical Abuse?

Physical abuse is any nonaccidental injury to a child under the age of 18 by a parent or caretaker. Nonaccidental injuries may include beatings, shaking, burns, human bites, strangulation or immersion in scalding water with resulting bruises and welts, broken bones, scars or internal injuries.

Child abuse is typically a pattern of behavior that is repeated over time but can also be a single physical attack. It occurs when a parent or other person injures or causes a child to be injured, tortured or maimed, or when unreasonable force is used upon a child. Abuse may also result from unnecessarily harsh discipline or from punishment that is too severe.

Scope Of The Problem

The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse estimates that approximately 675,000 children are physically abused each year. In Oklahoma approximately 5,000 incidents of physical abuse are confirmed annually. It generally is accepted that Oklahoma's figures underrepresent the actual incidence of abuse.

Myths	Facts
The majority of parents who abuse their children are mentally ill.	Fewer than 10 percent of abusive parents have a severe mental disorder.
Physical abuse only occurs in lower socioeconomic families.	Reports of physical abuse have been confirmed in all socioeconomic levels.
Young children have frequent accidents that result in broken bones.	Many broken bones in children under age two are the result of intentional injury.
A physician's opinion is needed before a report of physical abuse can be made.	Proof of injury is not necessary to make a request for investigation.
Only children under age 16, can be reported as physically abused.	Physical abuse to any child under age 18 should be investigated.
Children who are being abused by their parents will ask someone for help.	Children are usually afraid to talk about their injuries or are too young to ask for help.

How To Recognize Physical Abuse

Physical Indicators

Unexplained bruises and welts

- are the most frequent evidence found
- are often on the face, torso, buttocks, back or thighs
- can reflect shape of object used (electric cord, belt buckle)
- may be in various stages of healing

Unexplained burns

- are often on palms, soles, buttocks and back
- can reflect pattern indicative of cigarette, cigar, electrical appliance, immersion or rope burn

Unexplained fractures/dislocations

- often involve skull, ribs and bones around joints
- may include multiple or spiral fractures

Other unexplained injuries

- lacerations, abrasions, human bite marks or pinch marks
- loss of hair/bald patches
- retinal hemorrhage
- abdominal injuries

Behavioral Indicators

- Requests or feels deserving of punishment
- Afraid to go home and/or requests to stay in school, day care, etc.
- Overly shy, tends to avoid physical contacts with adults, especially parents
- Displays behavioral extremes (withdrawal or aggressiveness)
- Suggests that other children should be punished in a harsh manner
- Cries excessively and/or sits and stares
- Reports injury by parents
- Gives unbelievable explanations for injuries

CHILD FATALITIES: Did you know?

- Head trauma and shaken baby syndrome are the two most common causes of child abuse and neglect deaths.
- Children at highest risk are infants age one and under.
- A child fatality typically is the only or youngest child.
- Child abuse death rates are similar in urban and rural settings.
- Children die from intentional gunshot wounds, drowning and suffocation.

What Is Child Sexual Abuse?

Child sexual abuse is the exploitation of a child or adolescent for the sexual gratification of another person. It includes behaviors such as intercourse, sodomy, oral-genital stimulation, verbal stimulation, exhibitionism, voyeurism, fondling, and involving a child in prostitution or the production of pornography. Incest is sexual abuse that occurs within a family. The abuser may be a parent, stepparent, grandparent, sibling, cousin or other family member.

Scope Of The Problem

Approximately 405,000 cases of child sexual abuse are confirmed annually in the United States. Oklahoma confirms approximately 1,300 cases of child sexual abuse a year. It generally is accepted that these figures are significantly less than the actual incidence of abuse.

Current research indicates that one in four girls and one in seven boys will be sexually abused by the age of 18.

Child sexual abuse is more typically an ongoing relationship that can last up to several years. Verbal threats and coercion are frequently used to force children to participate and keep the abuse a secret.

Myths

Sex offenders can be easily identified as they are strangers who offer rides or candy to children.

Most sexual abuse victims are teenagers who can protect themselves from exploitation.

Children often lie about being sexually abused.

Incest offenders only molest children in their own families.

Facts

Eighty to ninety percent of sex offenders are known to the child; they are family members and friends, neighbors and babysitters.

Children of all ages are sexually abused; over 1/3 of the victims are five years old or younger.

Children typically do not have the experience or vocabulary to accurately describe adult sexual activity.

Research indicates that many incest offenders also molest children outside their families.

Myths

The lack of physical violence in child sexual abuse means children are willing participants.

Sex offenders are severely mentally disturbed, homosexual or mentally retarded.

Facts

Verbal threats and coercion are frequently used to force children to participate and keep the abuse secret.

Many sex offenders appear to be responsible and respectable citizens. They may be married and appear to function well in many areas of life.

How To Recognize Child Sexual Abuse

Children are unable to give informed consent to sexual activity. Many children do not report their abuse and rely on adults to be aware of specific behavioral and physical indicators. A child who persistently shows several of the following characteristics may be experiencing sexual abuse.

Remember: One of the most reliable indicators of child sexual abuse is the child's verbal disclosure.

Behavioral Indicators

- excessive masturbation in young children
- sexual knowledge or behavior beyond that expected for the child's developmental level
- depression, suicidal gestures
- chronic runaway
- fearfulness, anxiety
- frequent psychosomatic complaints, such as headaches, backaches, stomachaches
- drug or alcohol abuse
- avoidance of undressing or wearing extra layers of clothes
- sudden avoidance of certain familiar adults or places
- decline in school performance
- sleep disturbance

Physical Indicators

- somatic complaints, including pain and irritation of the genitals
- sexually transmitted disease
- pregnancy in young adolescents
- frequent unexplained sore throats, yeast or urinary infections

...LISTEN

What if a child tells you about abuse?

There may be times when children or adolescents tell you, directly or indirectly, about abuse in their family. Remember how very difficult it is for children to talk about their abuse, especially as they may think it will get them or their family into trouble. Therefore, it is very important for you to handle their disclosure with sensitivity.

In talking with children, it will be helpful if you:

- provide a private time and place to talk
- do not promise not to tell; tell them that you are required by law to report the abuse
- do not express shock or criticize their family
- reassure them that they have done the right thing by telling
- use their vocabulary to discuss body parts
- tell them that the abuse is not their fault, that they are not bad or to blame
- determine their immediate need for safety
- tell the child you must report the abuse to the proper authorities
- let the child know what will happen when you report

Remember: Many children are too young to tell about their abuse. They depend on you to notice and report.

Important Phone Numbers

Child Abuse Reporting Hotline
Department of Human Services 1-800-522-3511
(Statewide)

Local Department of Human Services. ..... _____
(number)

Oklahoma State Department of Health
Office of Child Abuse Prevention 405-271-4477

Important Phone Numbers

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Department of Human Services 1-800-522-3511
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Oklahoma State Department of Health
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